

The Pecking Order 2023

Romania

Improving broiler chicken welfare in
the Romanian fast-food industry



HUMANE SOCIETY
INTERNATIONAL

EUROPE

Chickens are active, social, curious animals with surprising cognitive abilities. Yet, conventional chicken production ignores their natural abilities and causes serious animal welfare problems.



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The fast-food industry is an important buyer of chicken meat and as such has the ability and responsibility to drive improvements on farms to support higher animal welfare.

FOREWORD

Romania is a significant player in Europe's broiler chicken industry, supplying both domestic and international markets with poultry products. The fast-food industry is an important buyer of chicken meat and as such has the ability and responsibility to drive improvements on farms to support higher animal welfare.

The Pecking Order 2023 – Romania is the first report of its kind. It evaluates and assesses the Romanian fast-food industry on its progress toward higher broiler chicken welfare by assessing 12 fast-food chains, both international and national, on the science-based European Chicken Commitment criteria. This Romanian report is part of the 2023 European edition of The Pecking Order report series, which also includes France, Germany, Italy, Spain and Poland.

Since 2019, The Pecking Order reports have highlighted the advancements made by various major fast-food brands to meet their commitments to improve animal welfare. The 2022 European report also showed that broiler chicken welfare appears to be better managed by fast-food chains in certain countries. This report is designed to serve as a snapshot of where the Romanian industry is today and how it can improve moving forward.

In addition to corporate policy change, the European Commission, in line with the EU Farm to Fork Strategy, is currently evaluating its animal welfare legislation. This includes updating the directive protecting chickens raised for meat production, which requires all EU member states to adhere to minimum welfare standards.

This report is a resource for companies, customers and policymakers. Fast-food chains and other food businesses in Romania will need to adapt not only to customers' demand for higher standards of animal welfare, but also the growing body of science and multinational recommendations, as well as changing European legislative policy. This is an opportunity for Romania to lean into these changes, and we hope that this publication will help stakeholders in Romania to understand the baseline for animal welfare, so that crucial improvements can be made for chickens.

Sincerely,



Andreea Roseti
Country Director, Romania
Humane Society International/Europe



INTRODUCTION

In 2021, more than 6.2 billion broiler chickens were slaughtered in the European Union. Poland produced the most chicken meat, about 1.12 billion chickens, followed by France with 761.6 million and Spain with 680.7 million. Romania ranked eighth in the EU, producing 271.7 million chickens.¹

The conventional method of raising chickens has led to a production system in which many chickens suffer from serious welfare problems. However, there is a promising development: A growing number of fast-food chains are integrating chicken welfare into their company procurement policies. This shift is driven by increased customer awareness about the unacceptable conditions these animals face and customers' rising demand for improvements. Scientists have long recognized the welfare needs of chickens.

This report examines the fast-food industry in Romania in relation to its commitment to chicken welfare. It investigates whether the growing interest from customers for higher animal welfare has been translated into action by leading restaurant chains, both international and national, committing to higher standards for how broiler chickens are treated. It also explains the changes that companies need to make to align with future EU legislation, and the findings that the country's food industry has fallen behind on this issue. It is important to note that this report identifies animal welfare issues and not specifically the "quality" of products.

Legislation

For over 40 years, the EU has been dedicated to enhancing the well-being of farmed animals. A significant advancement occurred in 1998 with the adoption of the General Directive on the protection of animals kept for farming purposes (Council Directive 98/58/EC), emphasizing the welfare and protection of farmed animals. Specific to broiler chickens, additional provisions are outlined in the directive protecting chickens kept for meat production (Council Directive 2007/43/EC).

Aligned with the EU Farm to Fork Strategy, the European Commission is evaluating its animal welfare legislation based on the latest animal welfare science. This includes updating the directive protecting chickens kept for meat production. All European Union member states are required to adhere to these animal welfare regulations to ensure baseline welfare standards.

European chicken commitment

The Pecking Order evaluates the fast-food industry based on the [European Chicken Commitment \(ECC\) criteria](#). The specific asks of ECC provide a science-based set of animal welfare improvements (see Table 1 and next section). In Europe more than 350 companies have made commitments to meet the ECC criteria for higher standards in chicken production.² Taking these steps may also help in aligning their business practices with forthcoming broiler chicken welfare legislation.

CRITERIA	EUROPEAN CHICKEN COMMITMENT REQUIREMENT
Stocking density	A maximum stocking density of 30 kg/m ²
Growth rate	Only slower-growing genetic lines permitted
Daylight	At least 50 lux light intensity, including natural light
Perches	At least 2 meters of usable perch space per 1,000 birds
Pecking substrates	At least 2 pecking substrates per 1,000 birds
Air quality	At least the requirements of Annex 2.3 of the EU Directive protecting chickens raised for meat
Cages	No cages or multitier systems
Humane slaughter	Controlled atmospheric stunning using inert gas or multiphase systems, or effective electrical stunning without live inversion
Third-party audits	Required to demonstrate compliance

Table 1: ECC Criteria

BROILER CHICKEN WELFARE

Chickens are active, social, curious animals with surprising cognitive abilities. They have referential alarm calls (different vocalizations for different types of predators)^{3,4} numerical competency⁵ (they can count) and they are protective mothers.^{6,7} Yet, conventional chicken production ignores these natural abilities and causes serious animal welfare problems, including subjecting these animals to crowded, barren living conditions, inhumane slaughter and physical and physiological problems associated with rapid growth. The science is clear. Chickens kept for meat production suffer immensely under conventional production methods. By adopting the criteria of the ECC, fast-food chains can improve the lives of millions of chickens.

Overcrowding and cages

Overcrowding in commercial production facilities negatively impacts the welfare of chickens. It reduces their ability to express natural behaviour and avoid social interactions. As the birds compete for space, they disturb each other by interrupting rest patterns.⁸

In more crowded poultry barns, more manure is produced. As wet litter accumulates, high stocking density elevates litter moisture⁹ and ammonia.¹⁰ Deteriorating litter conditions can increase necrosis (sores) on the legs and feet of chickens.^{11,12}

Although most chickens raised for meat production are reared on littered floors, occasional use of cages, particularly for breeding birds, restricts movement and impedes natural activities such as foraging and dustbathing.

Rapid growth

Selective breeding for rapid weight gain severely impacts animal welfare. The selection of production-related traits has many unintended side effects including reduced mobility,¹³ disproportionate kidney and lung size,¹⁴ and muscle damage.¹⁵ Particularly concerning is severe lameness and difficulty walking,^{16,17,18} often leading to debilitating leg disorders, and in most flocks, there can be found birds so crippled they are unable to reach feed and water.

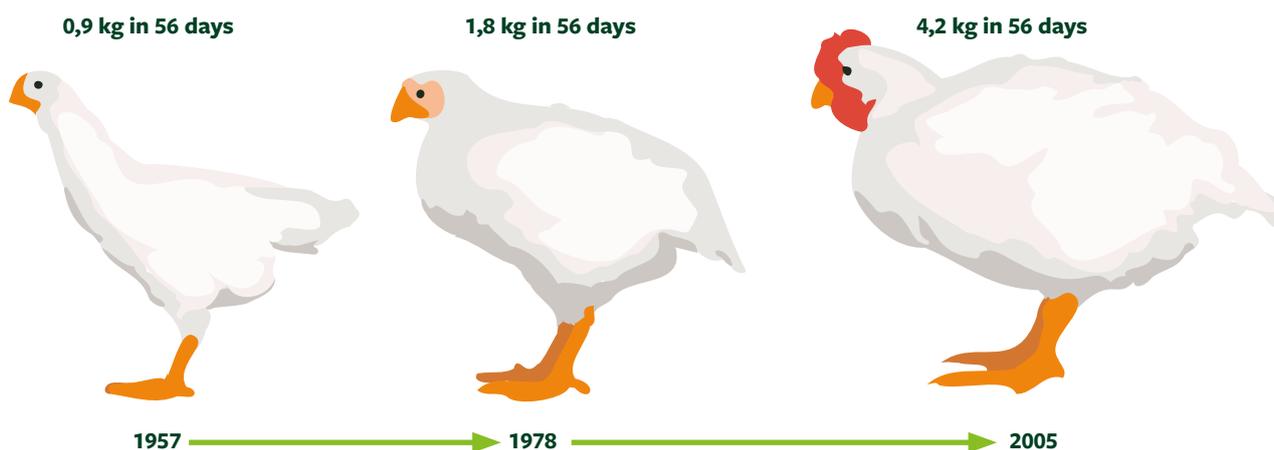
Barren environments

Except for feed and water lines, conventional production facilities are completely barren environments. Environmental enrichment is the addition of objects and resources that can enhance the lives of animals by making their surroundings more interesting and providing outlets for natural behavior. For chickens, enrichments such as hay bales, perches, and platforms create more opportunities for activity and engagement and result in better quality of life.

Dim lighting and poor air quality

Broiler chickens prefer higher-intensity lighting for active behaviour and dim lighting for resting.²⁰ In conventional chicken production, lights are generally kept on for 18-20 hours a day to encourage the birds to eat more and gain weight faster. Broiler chickens are young animals (typically slaughtered at

Graphic 1: Chickens raised conventionally are bred for extremely rapid weight gain.¹⁹





only 6 weeks of age) and need rest. The short period of nightly darkness disrupts the birds' natural sleep rhythms and slows their melatonin production,²¹ a brain hormone involved in the regulation of growth and immune function. Prolonged light can worsen skeletal issues.^{22, 23}

Crowded indoor settings can expose chickens to poor air quality due to pollutants including dust, bacteria, fungal spores and gases (CO₂ and ammonia), impacting breathing and health.²⁴ Respirable particle (dust) concentrations are positively correlated with the number of the birds in the building,²⁵ and ammonia concentrations increase with the stocking density,²⁶ although this will vary with the effectiveness of the ventilation system. Excessive ammonia levels (above 50 parts per million) over long periods of time (four weeks or more), can be detrimental enough to reduce the growth of chickens and increase flock mortality rate.²⁷

Inhumane slaughter

In Europe, most chickens are slaughtered using an electrical water-bath system. The birds are hung upside down by their legs in shackles and conveyed through an electrified tank of water in an effort to stun them before automated throat cutting. This method, however, can lead to inconsistent stunning, with not all chickens successfully rendered unconscious.²⁸ An alternative is Controlled Atmosphere Stunning, where chickens are conveyed, upright, in their transport crates through a tunnel of increasing

gas concentration to render them unconscious before shackling. CAS offers benefits including better working conditions for slaughterhouse personnel and, because the birds are not handled until after they are unconscious, the system removes the potential for mistreatment of conscious birds by the personnel who hang them on the shackles.

Antibiotics and public health

The intertwined relationship between antibiotics, public health and chicken production has far-reaching implications for both animal welfare and human health. Antibiotics are widely employed in chicken production to enhance growth and prevent diseases, yet their misuse and overuse has contributed to antibiotic-resistant bacteria, impacting animals and humans alike.

The transmission of antibiotic-resistant bacteria from animals to humans raises concerns about the emergence of difficult-to-treat infections, potentially resulting in increased mortality rates.²⁹ These human food safety concerns have resulted in a ban throughout the European Union on the use of antibiotics as growth promoters in animal feed.³⁰

The ECC's emphasis on robust breeds that require fewer antibiotics^{31, 32} can help mitigate the development of antibiotic-resistant pathogens.

THE PECKING ORDER 2023: METHODOLOGY

The criteria for *The Pecking Order* European Methodology are based on the ECC, which has been developed in line with the latest welfare science and endorsed by animal protection organisations in multiple countries. The ECC focuses on stocking density, breeds, enrichments, broiler cages, slaughter process and auditing.

The assessment evaluates the progress of the fast-food companies in two areas or “pillars”. There are 13 questions, and each question focuses on a specific attribute of the ECC to improve chicken welfare.

PILLAR 1: COMMITMENTS & TARGETS	PILLAR 2: IMPLEMENTATION & REPORTING
Questions focus on published time-bound commitments to improve chicken welfare. The score in Pillar 1 reflects the scope and completeness of a company’s commitment to the specific criteria outlined in the ECC.	Questions focus on reporting of progress against published commitments. The score in Pillar 2 reflects the extent to which a company has implemented its commitments in relation to the ECC criteria.

Each company receives a pillar percentage score, which combine, with equal weighting, for an overall percentage score. Scores are also translated into Tiers and Grades as shown in the table below.

TIER	GRADE	OVERALL RESULT
1	Leading	86-100
2	Good	76-85
3	Making progress	60-75
4	Getting started	50-59
5	Poor	26-49
6	Very poor	0-25

Table 2: Tier and Grade percentage thresholds

The report only uses information that the companies have shared publicly, such as on their national or international websites, or in their annual reports. Before the ranking process, all the companies were informed about the analysis and had the opportunity to provide missing and publicly available information.

Selection of fast-food chains

Fast-food chains are significant buyers and sellers in the chicken industry, both in terms of consumption and influence. When they adopt and implement higher welfare procurement and production policies, they not only improve animal welfare but also raise consumer awareness about what they are doing right and drive positive change in the industry.

This report targets prominent international and national fast-food chains that serve chicken meat to their customers. This year, the European edition of *The Pecking Order* conducted an assessment encompassing 69 individual company evaluations of international and national fast-food chains covering the markets of Germany, France, Italy, Poland, Spain and Romania.

In Romania, nine leading international and three national chains were selected. Romania’s national chains—5 to go, Salad Box, and Spartan—were chosen based on their size, brand visibility, or existing animal welfare commitments.



RESULTS

Results on company level

COMPANY	OVERALL SCORE TIER	OVERALL SCORE GRADE	OVERALL SCORE %	PILLAR 1: COMMITMENTS & TARGETS	PILLAR 2: IMPLEMENTATION & REPORTING
Subway	4	Getting started	57%	94%	20%
IKEA	5	Poor	47%	94%	0%
PAUL	5	Poor	47%	94%	0%
Pizza Hut	5	Poor	47%	94%	0%
KFC	6	Very poor	2%	3%	0%
Burger King	6	Very poor	0%	0%	0%
Domino's	6	Very poor	0%	0%	0%
McDonald's	6	Very poor	0%	0%	0%
Starbucks	6	Very poor	0%	0%	0%
5 to go	6	Very poor	0%	0%	0%
Salad Box	6	Very poor	0%	0%	0%
Spartan	6	Very poor	0%	0%	0%

1: Leading 86-100, **2: Good** 76-85, **3: Making progress** 60-75, **4: Getting started** 50-59, **5: Poor** 26-49, **6: Very poor** 0-25

Table 3: Overview of individual scores of the Romanian fast-food companies

Overall score

The provided data represents the overall scores, tiers and grades for the various fast-food companies in Romania based on their performance in terms of chicken welfare. Subway leads with a score of 57% in the “Getting started” category, while IKEA, PAUL and Pizza Hut follow with scores of 47%, all falling into the “Poor” category. Notably, KFC, Burger King, Domino’s, McDonald’s, Starbucks, 5 to go, Salad Box and Spartan received very low scores of 2% or 0%, placing them in the “Very poor” category.

Commitments and targets

Some fast-food chains are doing better than others in reaching their commitments and targets (Pillar 1) for chicken welfare. The data reveals that Subway, IKEA, PAUL and Pizza Hut have acknowledged the need to improve chicken welfare, each scoring a high 94%, positioning them as leaders in this aspect.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, KFC, Burger King, Domino’s, McDonald’s, Starbucks, 5 to go, Salad Box and Spartan exhibit a lack of commitment with scores of 3% (KFC) and 0% (the rest). This suggests these companies have yet to take meaningful steps or make clear commitments to improving chicken welfare.

Implementation and reporting

This assessment finds and reveals a disappointing pattern across all the fast-food chains in Romania when it comes to reporting on and implementing their commitments on chicken welfare.

Subway is the only chain that received a non-zero score in Pillar 2. While it demonstrates some effort in implementing and reporting its chicken welfare commitments related to stocking density, enrichment and humane slaughter at regional level, there is room for improvement, as it falls still in the category “Very poor”.

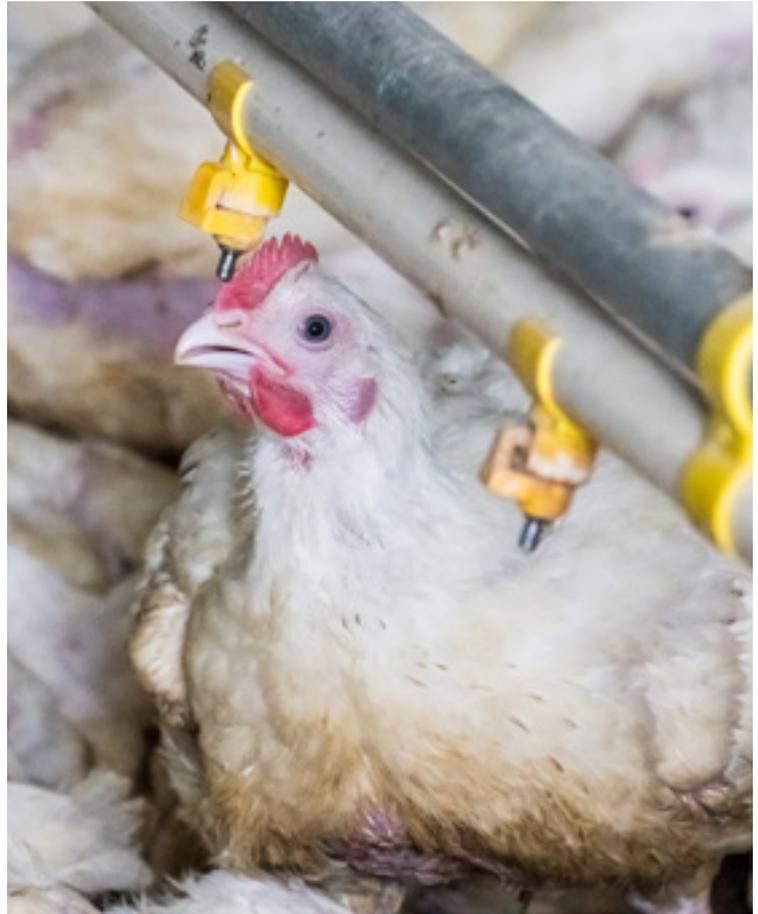
All other assessed companies, including IKEA, PAUL, Pizza Hut, KFC, Burger King, Domino’s, McDonald’s, Starbucks, 5 to go, Salad Box and Spartan, received a score of 0% in this pillar. These companies did not publish any information on their websites. This indicates a significant lack of action and transparency. Without progress reporting, the public is left to assume that these companies are doing nothing to eliminate the cruelty happening to chickens in the supply chain.

Results on country level

Fast-food chains in Germany, France, Italy, Poland, Spain and Romania were assessed.

Based on the average score of all the fast-food companies assessed in a country, Germany has the highest-performing companies, with an average overall score at 37%, indicating a relatively better performance in broiler chicken welfare commitments and implementation. French companies follow with an average score of 36%. Both countries are outperforming the fast-food companies in the other nations but still fall in the “Poor” category. The companies in Spain and Italy have average scores of 23% and 19%, respectively, indicating a considerable gap in their broiler chicken welfare efforts. Polish and Romanian fast-food chains have the lowest average overall scores at 18% and 17%, respectively, indicating a significant need for improvement in both countries. These four countries are placed in the category “Very poor” (see figure 4).*

Analysing and comparing country scores comes with limitations due to variations in the composition of assessed companies across different markets. To enhance comparability, an alternative comparison can be made by focusing on the six companies assessed in all markets, including Burger King, IKEA, KFC, McDonald’s, Starbucks and Subway.



The average Overall and Pillar scores by country

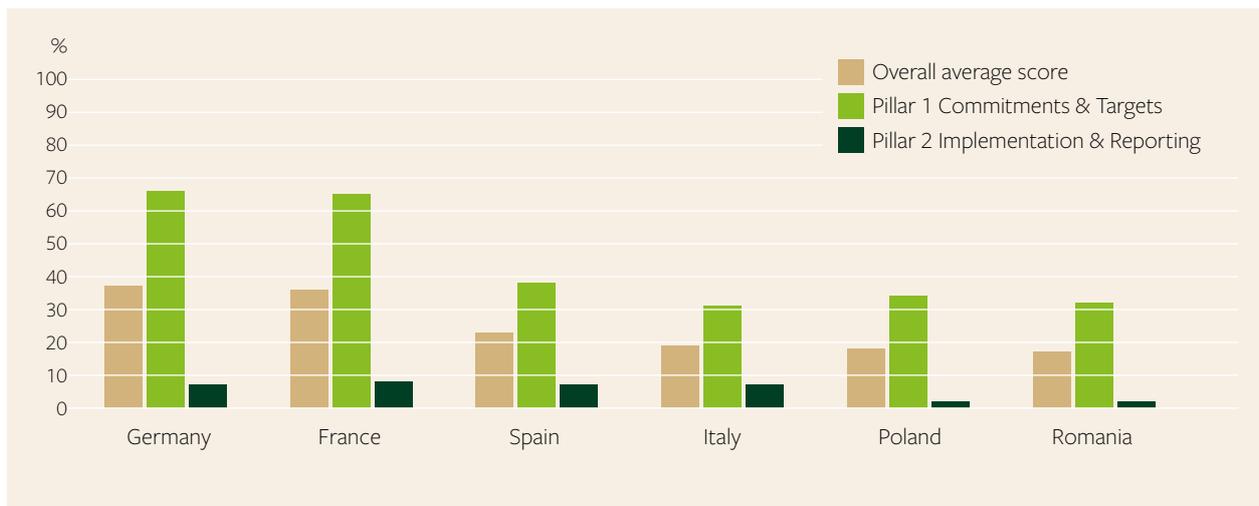


Table 4: Overview of the country results based on the fast-food companies’ scores in that country

* It should be noted that France is assessed on additional questions on the use of winter gardens (Q1.8 and 2.7) in each pillar. PAUL was the only company that scored on question 1.8 and no company scored on question 2.7. Due to this additional question (where scoring was limited), France’s average scores are depressed compared to other markets.

Table 5 illustrates that in this scenario, French and German fast-food companies emerge as front-runners with average overall scores of 37% and 31%, respectively (category “Poor”). Meanwhile, companies in Italy and Spain recorded an average

overall score of 22% and are followed by the Polish chains with a 20% score. Romanian companies displayed the lowest average overall score at 18%. These four countries are in the category “Very poor”.

The average Overall and Pillar scores by country for companies assessed in all markets

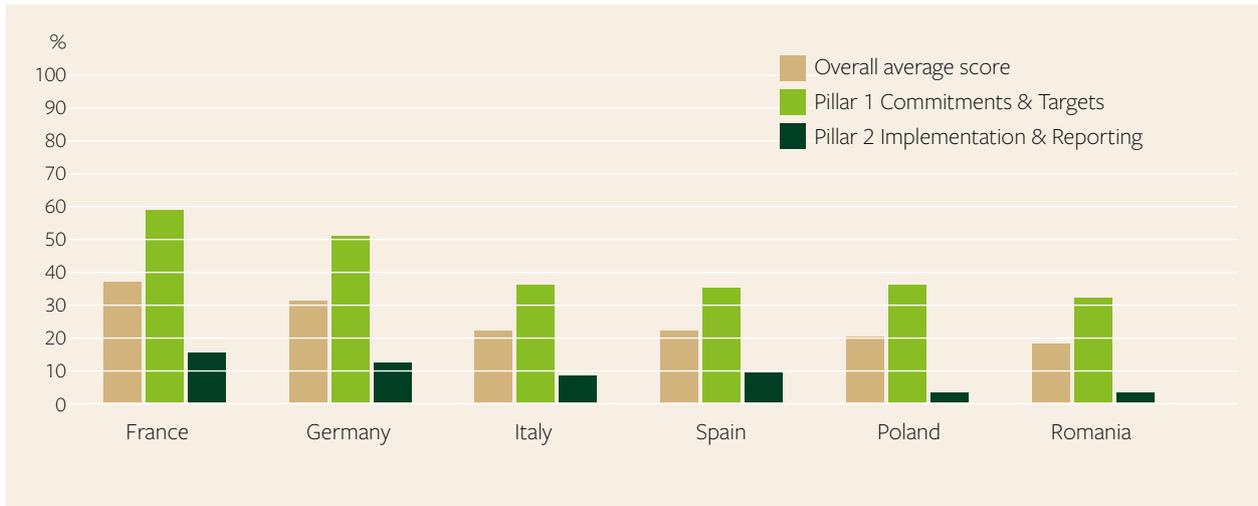


Table 5: Overview of the country results based on the fast-food companies’ scores that are assessed in all countries: Burger King, IKEA, KFC, McDonald’s, Starbucks and Subway.

COMPANY RESULTS AND ADVICE

The Pecking Order evaluated and assessed the progress of 12 international and national fast-food chains in Romania, regarding their commitment to broiler chicken welfare in relation to implementing the ECC criteria. Each fast-food company received a score and advice to make improvements.

International fast-food companies

Burger King



Burger King is an American fast-food restaurant chain present in 100 countries. The parent company is Restaurant Brands International. Since 2008, 11 restaurants have opened in Romania and are operated by franchisees AmRest and McWin.

As Burger King Romania does not have a chicken welfare policy published anywhere, it scored 0%. Burger King can learn from its peers in France, UK, U.S., and Canada, where the chain has committed to higher chicken welfare standards.

Domino's



Domino's is an American pizza delivery chain with stores in over 80 countries. The chain is owned by Domino's Pizza Inc. Since 2010 franchisee Radacini Group opened 25 stores in Romania.

Domino's Romania did not score points as it does not have a published policy covering chicken welfare. Domino's has the opportunity to take lessons from its counterparts in Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Luxembourg and the Netherlands, all of which have embraced the ECC.

IKEA



IKEA, a Swedish/Dutch company renowned for selling household furniture, home products and food, operates globally under franchise by Inter IKEA Systems, spanning over 50 countries. In Romania, IKEA established its presence in 2007 and now has three stores.

In 2019, IKEA pledged to the Better Chicken Commitment for North America and Europe. IKEA Romania received an overall score of 47%, excelling in the commitment pillar with a 94% score for publishing chicken welfare standards on its global website. However, it received a 0% score for reporting progress quantitatively.

IKEA Romania is the only assessed international company that communicates about animal welfare on the Romanian company website. IKEA Romania can enhance its rating by providing comprehensive information on chicken welfare via its website in Romanian instead of referencing global resources. IKEA Poland can serve as an example with its chicken welfare policy posted in Polish.

KFC



KFC, an American fast-food chain renowned for its fried chicken, holds the second-largest presence among fast-food chains in Romania, having 80 restaurants established since 1997. The brand operates through franchisees, namely Sphera Franchise Group and AmRest, and is affiliated with Yum! Brands Inc.

Yum! has a global animal welfare policy which includes chicken welfare, so KFC Romania received a 2% overall score. The policy has no concrete standards and is not aligned to any ECC criteria. KFC Romania can ask support from its peers in Sweden, France, Denmark and other European countries that committed to the ECC.

McDonald's



McDonald's, an American fast-food chain, ranks as the world's largest chain, with a presence across over 100 countries. In Romania it is also the market leader. McDonald's has 90 restaurants, making its debut in 1995. The operations of McDonald's Romania fall under the purview of the franchisee Premier Capital.

McDonald's has developed its own broiler welfare commitments for 13 key markets, which do not align with the ECC. McDonald's Romania falls outside the scope of this global policy, achieving a score of 0%. To enhance its standing, McDonald's Romania needs to commit to the ECC criteria, and publish these commitments for greater transparency.

Starbucks



Starbucks is an American chain of coffee stores present in 80-plus countries. The parent company is Starbucks Corporation. Since 2007, 54 restaurants have opened in Romania and are operated by franchisee AmRest.

As Starbucks Romania does not have a chicken welfare policy published, it scored 0%. Starbucks Romania can learn from its peers in the UK, U.S. and Canada, where the chain has committed to higher chicken welfare standards.

PAUL



PAUL, a French chain of bakery-café restaurants operating in approximately 50 countries, is part of the Holder Group. Since 2008, PAUL has expanded to include 12 bakeries in Romania.

In 2020, Holder Group committed to the ECC in Europe for its subbrand PAUL. PAUL Romania obtained an overall score of 47%, demonstrating strong commitment by achieving a 94% rating for disclosing its chicken welfare standards on its international website. Nonetheless, it received a 0% score for quantitatively reporting progress. To improve its score, PAUL Romania, needs to provide more information on chicken welfare through its Romanian website.

Subway



Subway is an American fast-food restaurant chain that specializes in sandwiches. Since 2012, around 40 restaurants in Romania have opened. Each Subway restaurant operates independently under independent ownership.

Subway Group has specified time-bound commitments for Romania up to 2026 in accordance with the ECC. Subway UK provides performance reporting for its European supply. Consequently, Subway Romania scored 57%, featuring a 94% score in the commitment pillar and a 20% score for implementation and reporting. To improve the scoring, Subway Romania needs to state its commitment to the ECC on its own website and start reporting on its progress.

Pizza Hut



Pizza Hut, an American pizza restaurant chain, spans 100 countries and is one of Romania's prominent fast-food chains; it opened in the country in 1994 and has 40-plus locations in Romania. It operates under franchisee Sphera Franchise Group and is a subsidiary of Yum! Brands Inc.

In 2020, Pizza Hut Romania pledged to adhere to the ECC criteria, facilitated by its parent company, Yum!. This commitment resulted in a 47% overall score, featuring a 94% score in the commitment pillar but a 0% score for implementation and reporting. To improve its score, Pizza Hut Romania must publish its own chicken welfare policy and update the public on its implementation progress on its Romanian website.



National fast-food companies

5 to go

5
to go

5 to go is a Romanian coffee shop chain with around 450 locations distributed across 90 cities in Romania. It surpasses Starbucks locally, making it the largest coffee chain in the country. The shops are operated through a franchise-based business model; the first shop opened in 2015.

5 to go hasn't published any information related to animal welfare generally or chicken welfare specifically. Consequently, 5 to go receives a score of 0%. To enhance its position, 5 to go must publish an animal welfare policy that encompasses chickens and aligns with the ECC and start progress reporting.

Salad Box

SALAD B^{OX}

The Romanian fast-food company Salad Box has around 75 restaurants and focuses on healthy food. It was founded in 2012. The franchise restaurants are owned by Sterling Cruise. It is present in Romania, Germany, France, Italy and nine other countries.

Salad Box hasn't published any broiler chicken welfare policies. This has led to a score of 0%. However, Salad Box has demonstrated its awareness of animal welfare by committing to achieving 100% cage-free eggs in Romania by the end of 2025.³³ To improve its score, the company must add a commitment to the ECC and start publishing its progress.

Spartan



Spartan is a Romanian fast-food chain with roughly 75 restaurants, of which around half operate under franchise agreements. It ranks as the third-largest player in the local restaurant industry, behind McDonald's and KFC. Founded in 2012, the Spartan restaurant chain operates as a subsidiary within the Strong MND Corporation.

Spartan hasn't published any information related to animal welfare generally or chicken welfare specifically. Spartan therefore scores 0%. To improve its standing, Spartan needs to publish an animal welfare policy that covers chickens used for meat and that is aligned with the ECC and should start reporting on its progress.





CONCLUSIONS

Initial steps and significant room for improvement

The Pecking Order methodology was applied in six European countries in 2023, marking the inclusion of Romania for the first time. It was used to evaluate the fast-food industry in Romania by assessing 12 fast-food chains, both international and national, on their progress toward meeting the science-based criteria of the European Chicken Commitment (ECC). This report provides an overview of the industry's status and offers potential avenues for improvement.

At the European level, the results indicate variations in the management of chicken welfare by country, based on the average score of all the fast-food companies assessed in a country. German and French fast-food companies are the highest-performing chains, demonstrating more commitments and better implementation. However, these companies still fall into the “Poor” category. Polish and Romanian chains are significantly behind, with “Very poor” scores. These results underscore the need for collaborative endeavours among all nations to enhance chicken welfare.

At the national level, the outcomes for Romanian fast-food companies indicate that there is substantial progress needed within the country's fast-food industry concerning chicken welfare. First, although certain leading companies have published commitments to improve animal welfare for chickens in the meat industry, the majority have not yet prioritized chicken welfare in their corporate policies. This stresses the urgency for a more consistent and comprehensive action across the industry to address chicken welfare.

Second, the assessment reveals a collective failure among fast-food chains in Romania to effectively implement their commitments and provide transparent reporting about that progress. Consumers are left to wonder if they are addressing

the issue at all. To move forward, companies need to create road maps on how they will fulfil their commitments by 2026 or start working on chicken welfare if they have not yet published a commitment.

Third, several international fast-food companies have published policies, but few have published them on their Romanian websites. The Romanian national chains have fallen behind by not having published meaningful animal welfare policies for chickens.

National vs. international fast-food chains

The Pecking Order shows that international fast-food chains in Romania only scored points for their parent company chicken welfare policies and ECC commitments, as all of them, except for IKEA Romania, do not communicate about the efforts on their national websites or in national languages. Parent companies need to make clear to Romanian franchisees and owners that Romanian stores are expected to meet ECC standards by 2026 and communicate their progress publicly. National fast-food chains in Romania, such as 5 to go, Salad Box and Spartan, were at a disadvantage because they don't have parent companies with policies throughout Europe for chicken welfare. These chains are at the initial stages of familiarizing themselves with the topic of chicken welfare.

In summary, the assessment of broiler chicken welfare in Romanian fast-food chains highlights both initial steps and significant room for improvement. It emphasizes the pressing need for a more comprehensive and consistent progress on chicken welfare across the industry, driven by increased awareness of animal welfare concerns, growing consumer demand for change and forthcoming legislation.

CALLS TO ACTION

Many stakeholders can influence the welfare of chickens in the fast-food industry. This is the call-to-action for each group:



Fast-food companies and other restaurants

- Embrace the ECC and publicly commit to improving chicken welfare in your supply chain.
- Implement ECC standards in your chicken sourcing and production practices.
- Transparently communicate your commitment and progress to your customers on local websites.



Producers and farmers

- Align your broiler chicken production methods with ECC standards.
- Invest in infrastructure and practices that prioritize the welfare of chickens.
- Participate in training programs and workshops to learn how to effectively improve chicken welfare practices.
- Collaborate with fast-food companies and restaurants to meet ECC requirements.
- Advocate for support and incentives from policymakers to transition to ECC-aligned farming practices.



Customers

- Make informed choices by supporting restaurants and brands that commit to ECC and better chicken welfare.
- Voice your concerns and expectations for improved chicken welfare to businesses.
- Track your favourite companies' ECC progress, remind them that this is important to you, and advocate for stronger animal welfare standards.



Financial institutions

- Incorporate chicken welfare criteria into your financing and investing policies, practices and procedures.

- Support businesses that prioritize ECC compliance and higher welfare chicken production and procurement.
- Encourage transparency and reporting on chicken welfare practices as a part of financing and investing policies.



Policy decision-makers

- Develop and enforce comprehensive animal welfare legislation that addresses the worst abuses in conventional farming, including updated chicken welfare standards.
- Collaborate and participate in partnerships and initiatives that promote chicken welfare improvements.
- Incentivize and recognize businesses that invest in chicken welfare improvements.



Media

- Cover the work that animal protection nongovernmental organizations, politicians, companies and farmers are doing to improve chicken welfare.
- Advocate for transparency and urge companies to disclose animal welfare policies publicly so consumers know about sourcing practices.
- Monitor EU legislation and report on legislative developments, their significance and their potential to impact animal welfare in the food industry.



Animal welfare organizations

- Collaborate with other stakeholders, including fast-food companies, producers and policymakers, to advocate for improved chicken welfare.
- Provide expertise, guidance and support to businesses and individuals aiming to enhance animal welfare standards.
- Raise public awareness about ECC and the importance of more humane chicken sourcing.

MORE INFORMATION

HSI/Europe supports companies to improve animal welfare in their supply chains. This not only helps the animals used by the companies, but also makes the businesses future-proof by preparing for consumer demands and future legislation. With more than 600 companies having already embraced the voluntary ECC and aligned policies,³⁴ your organisation too can address chicken welfare. For inquiries or if you wish to join, please don't hesitate to reach out to us at: info@hsi-europe.org



The Pecking Order 2023 – European report

The Pecking Order report was initiated by the animal protection organisation World Animal Protection in 2019, assessing international fast-food chains on their chicken welfare on a global level. As of 2022, World Animal Protection expanded its assessment to the European fast-food industry. This year, *The Pecking Order* conducted the assessment of international and national fast-food chains in Germany, France, Italy, Poland, Spain and Romania. Each country was assessed by a different animal protection organisation, with Humane Society International/Europe conducting the evaluations in Romania and Poland. The European report can be found here: <https://www.worldanimalprotection.org/pecking-order-2023>

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to World Animal Protection for inviting Humane Society International/Europe to participate in *The Pecking Order 2023*. We are truly appreciative of the collaborative spirit and invaluable guidance throughout this endeavor.

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Our mission

Advancing the welfare of animals in more than 50 countries, Humane Society International works around the globe to promote the human-animal bond, rescue and protect dogs and cats, improve farm animal welfare, protect wildlife, promote animal-free testing and research, respond to disasters and confront cruelty to animals in all of its forms.



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